

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Newly submitted Claims 15-20 are presently active in this case, Claims 1-8 having been canceled by the present amendment and Claims 11-14 having been withdrawn from consideration as directed to a non-elected invention.

In the outstanding Official Action, the specification was objected to as including an informality requiring correction; Claims 2 and 8 were objected to as including informalities requiring correction; Claims 1-4 were rejected to under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hino et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,655,087); and Claims 5-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Suzuki et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0023418).

In response to the objection to the specification, the noted informality has been corrected herewith. Also, in view of the cancellation of Claims 1-8, the objection to Claims 2 and 8 is moot.

In light of the several grounds for rejection, Claims 1-8 have been canceled and replaced by new Claims 15-20 drafted to more clearly define over the cited prior art. To that end, new Claims 15 and 18, recite a cost-estimation method and apparatus, respectively, wherein a plurality of first estimation elements is extracted from the estimation formula, and a plurality of first source programs is generated. The plurality of first source programs converts each of the extracted plurality of elements into a format which can be executed by a preinstalled programming rule. Each estimation element included in the extracted estimation elements and used to obtain a physical unit value from the physical unit table is converted into the format which can be executed by the programming rule.

Claims 15 and 18 recite further features directed to a plurality of second source programs which extract the physical unit value from the physical unit table are generated, and a third source program which converts the estimation formula into the format which can be executed by the programming rule, on the basis of the first and second source programs generated. Then, a physical unit value obtained from the physical unit table is substituted for the estimation formula converted by the third source program, the estimation formula is executed, and the cost physical unit value in the manufacturing process is estimated.

As above noted, Claims 15 and 18 include generation of first, second and third source programs, as shown in FIG. 10. Claims 17 and 20 recite generation of the first, second and third source programs in the bending process.

Hino et al. and Suzuki et al. do not disclose a cost estimation method or apparatus including generation of the first, second and third source programs, as shown for example in FIG. 10. In particular, Hino et al. and Suzuki et al. do not disclose the subject matter recited in claims 17 and 20. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the newly submitted Claims 15-20 patentably define over the cited references.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above comments, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and the present application is believed to be

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in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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